Sheer

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Sheer

by peppermintquartz

Summary

Will and Hannibal fight before their first Valentine's Day together.

Notes

But if you love and must needs have desires, let these be your desires:
To melt and be like a running brook that sings its melody to the night.
To know the pain of too much tenderness.
To be wounded by your own understanding of love;
And to bleed willingly and joyfully.
-- Khalil Gibran, *The Prophet*

See the end of the work for more notes

Life after that bizarre Christmas has been nothing short of blissful.

Will has become used to life with Hannibal. Two to three times the past month, he attended society functions with Hannibal as the doctor's arm candy, and Hannibal usually opts for events they both enjoy. His older lover spoils him with good food and incredible sex. He has friends, plural, and sometimes meets them after work for a movie or just to hang out and chat. He has a piano that he can play daily. He's found a job and no longer relies solely on Hannibal to provide for him (and he feels a lot less kept).

One of the minor problems he has is the society gossip rags, but at least they're not as invasive as Freddie Lounds had been. Will remembers the display his lover had made of her torso, the spreading of her ribs to a heartless chest cavity. The display had been marvelous. The other problem is that he's actually happy. He keeps expecting Hannibal to be disillusioned with him, but the doctor is as loving as he has ever been.

Will can't remember being this content with life.

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That is, of course, until Beverly Katz, Dr Alana Bloom's FBI agent girlfriend, asks Will what she should do for Alana on Valentine's Day.

They are at the supermarket, Will shopping for bleach, toilet paper and detergent. Contrary to popular belief, Hannibal is only a snob about most things. As long as they are good to the touch and don't offend his sense of smell, the doctor doesn't mind mass-produced goods.

"Um, dinner and a movie?" he blurts out, because his mind is suddenly colliding with the thought that he has not planned anything for Hannibal at all.

Beverly frowns. "Not helpful, Will."

"I'm seventeen years old, what do you expect?"

"Something romantic! You and Hannibal are always making goo-goo eyes at each other, so I thought you'll have some idea of a romantic... thing," Beverly says lamely, and buries her face in her hands. "God, I can't believe it's already February. I just hope nothing macabre turns up. Oh god, I've just jinxed myself. The Ripper will give us a body for Valentine's-Shit."

"Beverly," says Will, schooling his face to hide his knowledge, "maybe we can focus on what Dr Bloom will like?"

The Asian woman nods and leans back in her seat. "How do you do it?"

"Do what?"

"Keep your doctor happy. I mean, I'm really glad he's back to consulting, which is great because Jack doesn't yell at us too much, and I see this goofy little half-smile when you call

him. Even at the most grotesque crime scenes. It's like he lights up inside whenever he thinks of you."

Will pulls distractedly at his coat sleeve. "I don't know. I just... I keep on being me, that's all."

Beverly grimaces, her mouth twisting to one side. "I wonder if Lanie does that glowy thing."

"She does." Will has to smile at that. "And then it's like she knows she's... glowing, and then she gets all embarrassed because Hannibal will immediately ask about you. It's funny to watch them sometimes."

The agent smiles too, and then sighs. "I really need an idea."

"Spa weekend?" Will suggests, because he remembers Johnny and Danielle from his workplace talking about it. "Massages and pampering."

Beverly looks thoughtful. "Could work."

Will panics, because now he can't give Hannibal a spa weekend, since the doctor and Alana seem to compare notes on their partners *all the freaking time*, like they were grading Will and Beverly or something. At least the young man is certain he's scoring well in Hannibal's books.

Dammit, he thinks on his way home on the bus (he still does not like cabs). It's almost a sure thing that Hannibal will come up with something extravagant and insanely romantic, because it's what Hannibal loves. Dramatic, elaborate, overwhelming.

Or perhaps he won't do a thing at all. Valentine's Day does feel too juvenile for the doctor. But Will thinks Hannibal will indulge in a demonstration of romance nonetheless. It'll distract him from the curtailment of his real passion. Ever since Christmas Eve, Hannibal has been throwing himself into multiple projects to keep his mind occupied, and on more than one night Will has listened to Hannibal composing at the harpsichord, discordant chords pushed together into uneasy melodies.

Will is slightly worried. He knows that Hannibal has kept his word and not gone out hunting, but the darkness inside the older man does not go away just on their demand and say-so. Hannibal is probably starting to feel the itch, Will knows, the kind of itch that's under the skin. Will feels his own painful addiction sometimes. It's a victory every time he does not dig a razor into his flesh. to feel the *wrong* flow out of him. He feels it a lot less now that he has Hannibal; he wishes his presence can do the same for the older man too. Hannibal admitted that he is a sadist; the fact that he cannot inflict pain on the deserving must be frustrating him.

Paradoxically, Hannibal is even more gentle and considerate during their lovemaking, as though worried about breaking Will apart. It's nice but Will rather likes Hannibal being demanding and forceful. He guesses that Hannibal is worried that he'll lose control in passion and hurt Will; it should be worrying how *much* Will wants Hannibal to feel safe enough with them to lose control.

He still has no clue what to get for his boyfriend by the time he gets home.

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Hannibal notices Will's distraction at dinner, but his young lover doesn't want to talk about it, so Hannibal lets the matter rest. It's not something to do with people, Hannibal knows. When Will has to deal with people, particularly strangers, he becomes bristly and comes home with a shadow of tension at his jaw.

Now that he has shed the identity of the Ripper, Hannibal finds himself quite at sea. He is tired of mimicking the masters in the arts - drawing from memory, faithful replicas... these are issues of technical control and thus of no challenge. He composes, but the conclusion of the pieces always eludes him. Reading and writing brings no relief. Cooking, which used to be such sublime delight, is a faded memory of something good.

Only Will sustains him and his resolve.

He lives for Will's half-lidded eyes and sleepy greetings in the morning, the short texts or occasional phone calls at lunchtime, bright companionship at dinner, eager responses at bedtime. Yet a part of Hannibal resents Will for being the proverbial muzzle; Hannibal's teeth *ache* to tear into meat that he himself butchered and elevated to art.

However, he knows Will is starting to sense his fraying. While Will has not stopped Hannibal from killing completely, he has set a standard. No longer is *rudeness* sufficient justification - not that Hannibal ever feels necessary to justify his kills, they die because they're pigs, they do not deserve life - Will wants Hannibal to kill for justice. This is why Hannibal graciously accepted Jack's repeated pleas to return to consulting for the FBI. Hannibal is hoping that one of those he helps to hunt actually targets him. Freddie Lounds' presence is sorely missed these days. She was a cockroach, but very good at drawing the attention of the deluded; his renewed cooperation would have meant a flurry of incendiary articles.

Dessert is a simple pineapple upside-down cake. They consume quite a bit of acidic fruit these days, though Hannibal doubts Will has figured out the reason behind the more frequent incorporation of cranberries, blueberries, plums and pineapple into Hannibal's recipes. Hannibal feels a sense of great pride in the careful tending of Will Graham. The latter's palate is developing and refining day by day, and soon he may be able to rival Alana Bloom's. He is less scruffy mongrel as he first appeared; cleaned up, well-fed, with proper, regular exercise, Will is an attractive young man. The doctor wonders when he may have to murder a rival for Will's affections. While he harbors no doubts about Will's fidelity, challengers and potential usurpers must be deterred.

At this time of his life, Hannibal is confident he can hold his own. Five, ten years from now, when Will blossoms fully, Hannibal may not be able to defend his territory. How would Will see him then?

"Hannibal? Is everything all right?" Will asks, tentative and worried, a hand over Hannibal's.

The older man then realizes he is gripping his dessert fork with far too much pressure. He's reminded again how far his control over himself has slipped. "I was only mulling over something. Don't mind me, mon amour."

"Can I help?"

Hannibal finishes his dessert. "No. This is a personal matter. I hope you don't mind."

Will chews on his lower lip doubtfully. "As long as you're not in danger."

The older man smiles and kisses his lover. "I am not." *I wish I were putting someone in it.*

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In the end, Will turns to Google. He has his January paycheck saved up, as is the sum Mrs Komeda gifted him with after the Christmas benefit, so unless he's planning a ridiculously extravagant present, he should be able to afford whatever he thinks is good enough for Hannibal. He's terrified he'll screw this up. Falling in love with Hannibal Lecter is the best thing that has ever happened in Will's life; he sometimes feels like the first seventeen years of his life had been payment for what he has now.

He browses through a number of insipid articles and finally Googles 'what to buy for your older lover'. A few things catch his eye, and after twenty minutes he's decided on a Himalayan salt block and a personalized canvas art print of his voice. He wonders if he can get Hannibal's as well; it'll make a lovely pair of artwork, unique and individual, and incredibly romantic.

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"You're not answering your honey?" Johnny asks. Everyone recognizes *Für Elise* as Will's ringtone for Hannibal. Will only smiles enigmatically before ducking out to the back. As expected, he has a voicemail message.

Will calls back after counting to twenty. "Hey there. I was in the restroom. How's work?"

"It could be better," Hannibal says, but his voice is warm. *"I have a disgruntled housewife in half an hour who still can't decide if she wants to divorce her husband or not. Suggestions, mongoose?"*

"Why not ask her to look for her husband's lover and sort things out with the other woman instead?" Will asks dryly. He knows Hannibal isn't really meeting a housewife after this. For all that the older man was a murdering cannibal, he does have a level of professional integrity. Will loves that Hannibal isn't all that complex to understand. The line Hannibal draws is simple: I will guard me and my own. As long as that line is not crossed, Hannibal remains human.

Cross that line... Will shivers. He remembers the vicious and lethal face of his lover, when he rained death and destruction on the Verger estate. Hannibal had been incandescent and glorious, a god of the old myths back among humanity. The utterly beautiful beast that Hannibal kept contained released, *on Will's request,* to maim and disfigure the twisted, cruel pervert that is Mason Verger... Will has had some exquisite dreams of what Hannibal is.

Hannibal's soft chuckle draws Will out of his thoughts. "You would make a wonderfully entertaining psychiatrist, mon rêve, though your career wouldn't last long."

"Which is why I repair pianos, not people," says Will, and he's about to say something else when he sees a short man, both his arms covered in tattoos, dragging a terrier-sized mongrel on a leash.

It's clear that the dog doesn't like the man or the leash. It's whining and struggling, its hind legs scrabbling to get away. The man swears at the poor dog. Will frowns and mutters something about calling Hannibal back in a moment before he walks over to the man and the dog.

"Hey, take it easy on the dog, all right?"

"What are you, the Dog Whisperer? It's my dog and I'll do what I want with it," snarls the man. He's wearing a greasy uniform from a garage; Will memorizes the name. *Freeman's Engine Repair.* The guy then kicks the whimpering dog. "Stupid pooch!"

Without warning, Will decks him. The man staggers back a few steps, dropping the leash. The dog runs yelping into the alley where Will was earlier.

"Fuck! What the hell, man?"

"You kicked the dog." Will relaxes into his heels, which will allow him to shift into a fighting stance quickly; Hannibal has taught him some self-defense moves. There is lightning humming in his bones. He wants to punish this man, kick him the way he kicked the creature. "I don't like cruel pet owners."

"It ain't yours, punk," says the man. "Whatever. It's a goddamn stray anyway. I hope you get rabies when it bites you."

Will narrows his eyes. "What's your name?"

"Fuck off," the man says, and spits on the ground. He walks away, rubbing the sore spot on his jaw where Will hit him, only glaring over his shoulder occasionally. After the guy turns the corner, Will returns to the alley and tracks down the small dog. It cowers behind a dumpster and whines when Will approaches it. There are scabs on it and it looks far too thin, and whimpers when Will reaches out to take the leash.

Will wants to bring it home. He sighs and looks up the shelter's number instead.

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Hannibal slides into Will slowly and carefully, making sure his grip on the young man isn't too tight. Will cants his hips higher and lowers himself to his elbows with a shaky sigh as his body adjusts. He loves being taken from behind, but he hates not being able to kiss the older man. He's still feeling the strange little electricity under his skin from the minor altercation and he wants it excised from his body.

"Harder, Hannibal," he moans, rocking back against Hannibal's slow thrusts. "Please."

His older lover doesn't oblige. Instead he becomes even more tender, his surgeon's hands skimming up Will's sweat-damp back, kneading into Will's shoulders in the same rhythm as he thrusts in and out at that maddening pace.

Will grits his teeth. "Damn it, Hannibal, I'm not gonna break. Fuck me like you mean it, like you want to."

"I want it like this," says Hannibal quietly. He sounds far too collected.

"Please, Hannibal, just-just go harder, make me scream." Will isn't above appealing to Hannibal's dominant side. "Please Hannibal!"

"No." Still that annoyingly cautious rhythm, still not giving Will what he needs.

Thoroughly pissed, Will jerks forward, pulling away from Hannibal and then sitting up to lean against the headboard. Hannibal doesn't even seem fazed or irritated, which for some irrational reason angers Will even more. "The hell, Hannibal? I need you to take me properly, please, not like I'm a, a breakable teacup or something."

Hannibal sits back on his heels and stares at Will. "Our lovemaking isn't always about your preferences, Will. This is a relationship, and sometimes there has to be someone who gives in."

Later, Will is going to think of this moment and see its hilarity: the two of them stark naked, still aroused, facing each other and reverting to other personas. Hannibal sinking into Dr Lecter therapy mode to lecture, Will drawing on his inner vicious predator and itching for a fight.

At this moment, Will is just infuriated. "It's not a good day for that, Hannibal. And what do you mean 'always'? You're the one leading the way here. This is my *first* relationship, okay, and I'm sorry if I thought I could ask for something I need in the bedroom!"

"Have I ever denied you anything?" Hannibal asks, a dark glimmer coming into his eyes. "I just wish for something different tonight, that is all."

"You said you'll give me anything I want." That glimmer sends shivers down Will's spine and reminds Will who the predator in the room really is. It excites him more than it scares him. "I want you out of control, just for tonight. I want to feel you even when I'm working tomorrow."

"And I said I'll never hurt you again." Hannibal doesn't look away. "You won't like it when I'm out of control, Will. I'll hurt you, and that I cannot bear."

"And this isn't hurting me?" Will all but yells. The mood is gone. "You think I can bear with *this?* You holding back - am I supposed to feel loved and cherished? Because all I'm feeling right now is that you don't trust that I love you enough to want you completely. Not this-this... pretend person."

Hannibal freezes. For a split second Will thinks Hannibal is going to attack him. He thinks of Hannibal's sharp, crooked teeth, his incredible strength, his brutal ruthlessness. Almost instinctively, Will's lust spikes and he bares his teeth, mentally urging Hannibal to go right ahead and claim him. He wants to wear Hannibal's mark, see the bruises the older man can leave on his skin.

Instead, Hannibal's expression shifts into a calm mask and he moves off the bed with an elegant swing of his long legs. He sweeps up his sleeping robe and pulls it on. Without a word, he strides out of the room, leaving Will still braced against the headboard, waiting for an assault that didn't come.

"Fuck!" Will hisses, and throws a pillow at the foot of the bed where Hannibal was earlier.

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Hannibal goes to the baby grand piano that he gave to Will, and plays and plays and plays until the roar for blood is only a mild hum in his ears. The strike of the hammers against strings is the only outlet of violence he allows himself.

it's as though Will wants him to kill again. Hannibal knows that Will very possibly has an empathy disorder that allows him to empathize deeply even with those he finds repugnant, but he never expected Will to turn it on him, to draw out the deep yearning to inflict pain on another person and reflect it on him. It stings like betrayal, only it isn't; it's a reminder.

Hannibal stops abruptly and forces himself to step away from the piano. His urge to destroy crawl over his skin and burrow into every pore until he's reeking with it. Half of him hopes Will comes down to find him, so that the young man gets to relive that night when Hannibal almost killed him. The other half recoils at the thought. The doctor presses his fingers to the bridge of his nose to stave off the headache he knows he will get soon. The dissonance in his desires is causing strain to accumulate in his shoulders and back and in his mind; he finds himself picturing how he would display each of his patients to the best effect. He thinks of locations, implements, logistics, and recipes. He thinks of the Rolodex.

He even thinks of Will, draped over his dinner table in the nude, completely disemboweled. Hannibal's *Pieta*. His rib cage would be spread apart to be the container for a centerpiece of black beauty roses, their mild fragrance enhancing the scent of Will in his entirety, and white lilies cascading from the chest cavity to the table surface. Will's eyes would be closed, because Hannibal would want to remember those eyes in vivid storm-blue, not as milky clouded orbs. Will's lips would be slightly parted, as though on a sigh. His sex would not be covered, because Hannibal loves him in every way, from the carnal to the divine.

He'd eat small servings of every single organ, even a sliver of tongue, but he would fully consume Will's heart. It'd be roasted, slow-cooked to tenderness. It'd be eaten without sides or garnish, just the heart sliced thinly.

It'd be Hannibal's final meal, because every other morsel of food would dilute the taste of Will's heart. Hannibal would starve himself to death staring at Will's rotting corpse on his table. Or perhaps he would cradle Will in his arms first, and then kill himself. Complete the *Pieta* tableau.

He opens his eyes and stares bleakly out the window at the snow covered backyard. Hannibal knows what he imagines would never come to pass. He will never hurt Will Graham with his own hands again, but, oh how he *longs* to dig in his claws and rip his beautiful lover apart.

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Will barely slept the whole night, drowsing uneasily in a bed that feels far too big and empty. Hannibal himself slept in the remaining guest room instead of sharing the bed with Will, and that rankled.

The instant he hears Hannibal in the kitchen, Will knows he hasn't been forgiven; he hasn't forgiven Hannibal either. He waits until he hears Hannibal go to their exercise room before he goes down to eat. Hannibal didn't even prepare Will's share, which is saying quite a lot about the doctor's emotional state. Will picks a banana and an apple and stuffs them into his backpack. He does not want Hannibal to have the satisfaction of seeing Will cook something for himself. Hannibal must have heard him shut the door or at least see him from the windows as Will leaves to take the bus to work instead of Hannibal driving him there. It's all very petty and small, and Will can't help the sense of vindictive glee at everything he's doing.

Will barely pays attention at work today while he assists Mr Curtis with the 1975 Steinway Model B. Thankfully, his eidetic memory helps him deal with the flurry of questions that Mr Curtis throws at him before allowing him to have lunch. Will doesn't call Hannibal after lunch, nor does he send a message. Hannibal doesn't call or text either.

It's so juvenile and stupid, Will knows, but he refuses to be the one to apologize.

The gifts are on the stoop when Will returns home. He brings them to his personal study, converted from the guest room where he first stayed in. Now he has his own space for when they need some time apart. After the fight last night, Will knows he does not want to see Hannibal until he has to. Now, as he contemplates wrapping the presents, he realizes it's already the 12th and it's really silly to hold on to a grudge when he knows they were both at fault.

It's his first Valentine's Day when he has someone to celebrate with. It's a sappy, commercialized day meant to drive up sales of inane things like roses and chocolates, and Will wants all of it, wants to indulge in the pure silly sappiness of it, just this once. He wants to make this right and he doesn't know how. He is aware, keenly so, that Hannibal is still castigating himself over the strangulation, but Will never blamed him for it. He knew what he was walking into then.

He wants the old Hannibal back, when they first started sleeping together, when Hannibal was teasing and demanding and *fun*. He wants the real Hannibal he has glimpsed before, the one with empty pools for eyes and the aura of an unearthly creature, he wants to taste that Hannibal so much that it hurts. He wants the considerate Hannibal that is gentle and tender and affectionate.

Will curses under his breath and wraps the presents quickly. He has to put this right, tonight. He can't sleep otherwise.

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Except Hannibal is called away to Cleveland to consult on some damn killer.

Will reads the terse message and wants to scream. He hopes the killer is one that deserves being skinned, because that's what Will wants Hannibal to do to him. He considers for a moment, and types exactly what he just thought.

'Quite apropos. You must be developing your psychic faculties. He turns his victims into angels.'

Will can't explain the warmth that spreads through his body. Hannibal is talking to him again. True, it isn't sweet nothings, but Will much prefers this. Hannibal isn't technically allowed to tell Will anything about the case, but the doctor never gives specifics. Will is imaginative enough to visualize in some detail though.

Probably because he's afraid of the dark behind his eyes.

'Fear alone is unlikely to push a simple man into a murderer.'

Will chews on his lower lip. he gives in and asks, *Why angels though?*

'Because he needs them soon.'

Will needs Hannibal who is so far away. He sighs; perhaps this is a good time for them both to regain some equilibrium.

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Hannibal is surrounded by fear; the room bleeds with it. The fear of the victims, the fear of the perpetrator... it's evident that it is a primal fear that is driving their Angel Maker into such displays. The arrangement of the couple 'praying' over the bed speaks of experience, but this is the first such exhibit.

The stench of vomit on the nightstand gives Hannibal a clue to what ails the murderer. There is an underlying stink also; Hannibal bends close to the pillows and sniffs. The techs exchange questioning glances but stay respectfully silent. Hannibal is used to their curious scrutiny and ignores them. The smell is familiar: a cocktail of chemicals and burnt rubber. His fingers twitch in his pockets. Hannibal straightens and strides out, decision made. He does not need diseased meat, and killing a man deluded by illness brings no satisfaction.

"Jack?"

"Dr Lecter. What do you have for us?"

Hannibal pulls off the latex gloves and pulls on his own leather ones. "I suspect the man has brain cancer - the scent is unmistakable. He's not debilitated yet, but he's suffering

hallucinatory episodes and his mind is no longer his own. I suggest looking for men whose behavior has deviated suddenly, following a stay at a hospital. He would have been a blue-collar worker, or from the lower income bracket. He is used to physical labor. The killings come from a place of deep fear; he must have come very close to death to realize how little good he has accomplished."

"The local PD will get us a list-" Jack is interrupted by a police officer who quickly informs him of another body found, with the skin ripped from the back to form angel wings.

Hannibal waits until Jack is done barking orders to his agents before he says, "I will need to return home as soon as I can; I have an appointment tomorrow afternoon with a patient who is at a critical stage of her therapy. The list based on my description would not be lengthy."

"What about the victims?"

"These are not premeditated kills, Jack. Your murderer sees them and chooses them on the spot. Whatever is infecting his brain makes him think these are worthy protectors or sinners needing to be cleansed."

"Thanks, Dr Lecter," says Jack sincerely. He's hungrier for success now, and even hungrier for goodwill to buoy him up in the face of his wife's impending death.

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It's in the wee hours of the morning when Will wakes up and the world is right again.

"Hey there," says Hannibal. He is still dressed but his shirt is rumpled and his hair is falling into his eyes.

"Hey yourself," says Will, and sits up to kiss Hannibal.

The older man exhales, as though he has been holding his breath since last night. His lips curve faintly but the tenderness is all in his eyes. "I'm exhausted from driving. Help me shower?"

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It's really only a shower.

Will shampoos Hannibal's hair first, the doctor bowing his head for Will to do it thoroughly. His hands rest on Will's slender hips and his thumbs rub circles absently over wet skin. Will ignores the stirring of want in his belly and focuses on getting Hannibal clean. After the shampoo is conditioner - Hannibal never skips it - and then Will grabs a loofah for the body soap. Exfoliation is one of the doctor's weaknesses, and Will makes sure to scrub over Hannibal's back and limbs as firmly as he can.

Hannibal never talks about the scars that litter his body, and Will has never asked. He doesn't talk about his own either, save for the burn from a hot pan on his left shoulder. He knows that

both of them are damaged and broken, and by some strange quirk of fate, their broken edges fit together perfectly, make them one whole. He wonders if anyone else has ever felt like this, joined so completely to another person to the point where it's impossible to separate them without shattering them anew.

Will is certain he will fight to the death anyone who tries to break them.

After they're both rinsed clean and dried off, Hannibal insists they sleep naked and that he gets to spoon Will. They soon warm up under the covers, Hannibal's hand over Will's heart, his exhales a steady metronome on the back of Will's neck. Will hears the slight change in Hannibal's breathing that indicates that the older man truly is asleep and smiles. He likes how their legs feel together, the hairiness of his older lover versus the smoothness of his own.

And his sleepy mind throws him an idea that may help him make up for the mean things he said to Hannibal.

"You're not a pretend person," Will murmurs, so soft he barely hears himself. "You are the only real thing in my world."

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At work, Will asks for half the day off. Mr Curtis allows it, on the condition that Will comes in the next Saturday to help with finishing a Mason & Hamlin upright. It is a condition that Will agrees to readily.

He takes the bus downtown and, resolutely not looking anyone in the face, hunts down the one shop in the mall that he never thought he would enter in his lifetime.

Well, it's always good to expand his horizons.

Let's hope he appreciates this, Will thinks as he pays, still not meeting anyone's eyes.

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Margot updates him on Mason's condition. She has recovered from the accident and from the loss; she knows that her new freedom comes at the hands of the man before her.

Hannibal is proud of Margot. She knows, and she does not fear. She has not been afraid for many years now, only angry, and the fear she had at Christmas was not for her life but of her future. What Hannibal has done has allowed her to move on. She runs the company now, and it's doing very well; she has put money aside for herself in a secret account, and is eager to move on.

"From the gleam in your eye, Margot, am I to assume that you have found a lovely companion?"

"She's wonderful," says Margot, her lush lips curving into a happy smile. "I want to tell her what I've been through at the hands of my dear brother."

Hannibal tilts his head. "How do you feel that will help your relationship?"

"I don't want there to be secrets between us," says Margot quietly. She puts a hand over the scar at her abdomen. "She should know. And when the time comes, I want her to bear the heir to the Verger fortunes."

"The only way is to get your brother's sperm."

"I will have it," says Margot. The fierce determination in her limpid eyes are a beautiful sight to behold. She is one of Hannibal's successes, the psychiatrist thinks proudly. Full-fledged and proud, a falcon who has broken free of her falconer. "It is to be my legacy now."

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"Are we going out tomorrow?" Will asks that evening as they do the dishes.

The domesticity has yet to lose its charm. Hannibal rinses and hands the dessert plate to his young lover. "Do you want to?"

"No, I just wondered if, um. I didn't know if you've made any plans."

Hannibal smiles and shrugs. "It'll be crowded everywhere. I doubt you'll want to be swamped by all the emotions from the masses. Or did you want to?"

"No," says Will. "I'd like a night in with you."

"Me too," Hannibal says, gaze tender.

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They curl together on the chaise longue in the study, indulging in soft kisses in front of the fire. They'll need to talk about the other night, but right now Will is content to bask in Hannibal's affectionate regard. Will rests his head on Hannibal's shoulder and mouths at his lover's neck.

"I missed you last night."

"It seems," Hannibal murmurs, "that separation does make the heart grow fonder."

That sends a warning bell ringing in Will's head. "Please don't tell me you're breaking up with me."

"No, of course not," Hannibal says, nipping at his lover's lower lip. "However, we have to consider that we will have quarrels in the future."

"So what are you saying?" Will peers up at the older man.

Hannibal brushes his thumb over Will's cheek. "The next time we fight, I'll stay at a hotel overnight, until our tempers simmer down. I'd much rather not have to deal with your cold shoulder like yesterday morning."

"I wasn't the only one giving a cold shoulder." Will huffs with amusement. "People are going to think I'm bullying you."

"Don't you always?" Hannibal teases. "And what would they say about me?"

"That you're the henpecked boyfriend?" Will jokes.

"Mm. 'Henpecked' would indicate that you are the wife of this relationship." Hannibal's smile deepens. It's a good look on him, relaxed and sleepy. Hannibal doesn't relax around other people. Will's heart aches a little at how lonely Hannibal had to have been. At least Will had his dad on his good days. Hannibal had no one.

Suddenly Will sits up, slack-jawed. "Wait. Are you proposing?"

"Do you want me to?" Hannibal asks, completely serious. He sits up too and holds Will's hands.

Will blinks and tries to parse the statement. "I-I don't know. Um. I've never-"

Hannibal laughs and kisses Will's brow. "Relax, mongoose. While I would love nothing more than to make you mine in the eyes of the law, it is too early yet for us to take this step."

"So... you'll want me as your husband someday?"

"Yes," says Hannibal, "but only if you want to. More than anything I want to make sure you'll always be taken care of, and if we're married, you'll be the sole beneficiary to all my assets after I die. But I also understand if you wouldn't want to be tied down to an old man."

"You're not old," Will says crossly, and adds, "and I don't care about the assets. It's just... Husbands." His smile turns shy. "That sounds really nice. Just... not so soon, I think."

Hannibal cradles Will's face. "Am I to assume that you won't reject my proposal when it comes?"

Will blushes and presses a quick kiss to his lover's palm. "Yeah. Or maybe I'll propose to you instead. You never know."

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The gaudy pink and red decorations all over town jars his senses, but Hannibal disregards them. It takes only a moment to pick up the flowers, another to check that the gift is indeed in his briefcase, and then he's on his way home.

He was entirely serious when he said he wants to marry Will. The more he can bind Will to him, the more secure he would feel; it's not lost on him that Will has developed into an attractive, confident young man who moves like a dancer when he's focused. It's annoying how little Hannibal feels in control of their relationship.

He would have loved to discuss this with Bedelia, but she has disappeared and he's not inclined to leave his Will alone for the duration of time to locate her. An option is to find a new psychiatrist, but thus far no one he's met has lived up to Hannibal's exacting standards. Bedelia Du Maurier was the model for his profession.

Another option is to mend the bridges with Alana. While they have mostly made up over Christmas, there is still much to be said and done before their formerly warm friendship can resume. Hannibal mulls over the idea. He likes Alana, inasmuch as he can like a person who doesn't know him, and if Will had not appeared he might have allowed her to seduce him into an affair. That aside, she is also the only person other than Mrs Komeda who knows of his various affairs before. Her empathy for others makes her a good counselor and therapist, and her sharp mind allows her to perceive people fairly accurately.

After this week, Hannibal will invite her and Beverly Katz to dinner. It's time to make nice.

*****

A single note is tacked on the door of the coat closet. *Go to the kitchen.*

Hannibal plucks the note and keeps it in his pocket, curious about what game his Will is playing. He expected to see Will at the door, welcoming him home; he expected to give his present immediately; he expected to sweep Will off his feet. This deviation from his plan is interesting.

He keeps the bouquet of black roses with him, the small gift box tucked under his arm, and goes to the kitchen as instructed. In the kitchen he sees a rectangular object, gift-wrapped in blood-red paper and secured with a thick black ribbon. He pulls the ribbon from the package and rolls it up before pocketing it. The gift is a lovely salt block, and Hannibal appreciates the thought that went behind selecting it.

Taped to the counter under the salt block is a second note. *Remove your jacket and waistcoat, then go to the study.*

The doctor shrugs out of the two named garments and lays them carefully over the counter. The second note joins the first in his pocket. He's smiling faintly, wondering what his lover is up to.

On the closed lid of the piano are two framed canvas art pieces of sound waves. Hannibal's brow creases. His tastes run towards the sumptuous; these are minimalist, almost. A short explanation is attached to one of the pieces.

Your voice and mine, Will wrote. *Us saying each other's names.*

It is cleverly intimate, Hannibal realizes, and his fingers trail over the one that represents Will's voice. Will, saying *his name*. Hannibal almost wishes his gift was as inventive. Now his presents pale in contrast. The note has a second page, he discovers a moment later.

Upstairs.

Hannibal is more than eager to show his appreciation now. His darling Will, selecting meaningful presents to appeal to him. He all but jogs up the stairs, the bouquet rustling in its froth of tissue paper.

The door to the bedroom is shut. On the door is another note. *Put down what you have in your arms before you come in.*

Hannibal obeys.

*****

In the en suite, Will can hear his lover outside and he shifts nervously from foot to foot. This is a sink or swim situation, and he's suddenly aware that he is in deep water.

"Will?" Hannibal calls out.

Will glances at himself in the mirror once more to check his appearance. Then he pads out of the bathroom.

"Hey there," he says, feigning a confidence that he doesn't quite feel at this moment. He tugs on the hem of Hannibal's favorite white shirt which he filched out of the doctor's closet and tries for nonchalance. It does not work. "Do you like it?"

Hannibal stares. His lips part slightly, but no sound emerges. His eyes rake over Will and his attire, and the latter suddenly feels quite the prat. He wraps his arms around his middle and swallows. "If-if this is too, um. God I'm sorry, I'll change out of this-"

"No, don't," Hannibal blurts, and strides over to pull Will to his chest, crushing his mouth with a famished kiss.

*****

Hannibal sees Will walking out of the en-suite bathroom clad in Hannibal's white shirt, and his lean legs encased in - the psychiatrist's brain stops working for a moment - sheer black lace stockings and garter belt. The hem of the shirt shifts a little when Will leans against the doorway and now Hannibal is hit powerfully by lust: Will is wearing black panties, low on his hips. In the light from the fireplace, Will looks like a walking wet dream.

"Hey there," says Will. "Do you like it?"

Hannibal can't take his eyes off Will. His mouth forgets how to form words as his gaze greedily devours Will's outfit.

Will mistakes his lack of response for indifference. "If-if this is too, um. God I'm sorry, I'll change out of this-"

"No, don't." He's moving before he realizes it, and he kisses Will with an ardor that surprises even himself. He ravishes his young lover's mouth, shoving him against the wall and pushing his thigh between Will's legs. His hands reach down and grabs Will's ass, feeling the silkiness of the underwear and then deliberately running his fingers along the plush bare skin between

ass and thighs. He plucks teasingly at the garters and traces where skin gives way to sheer lace and further down to silk.

Will jolts his hips forward and he nips the older man on the lip in warning. "And here I was afraid you wouldn't like it."

"I love it," says Hannibal, mouthing at Will's neck. His hands slide up under the shirt to knead circles into Will's hipbones. "Do you have any idea how sexy you are right now?"

"Kinda. I found some pictures online," says Will. His face is flushed, though whether at the admission or because of Hannibal's thumbs rubbing over his nipples is debatable. They are both hard; Hannibal wonders if Will can become addicted to the texture of satin over his erection.

His smirk is wolfish. "Did you become aroused looking at men in stockings?"

Will's blush this time is a complete giveaway.

The doctor traces his tongue over Will's ear, and drags a whimper out of the young man's throat. He grinds his pelvis against Will once more before hoisting him up, wrapping Will's legs around himself. "How do you want me?" he asks, his accent deepening.

Will's gaze flickers from Hannibal's shoulder to mouth and finally to his eyes. He bites his lower lip and then murmurs, *"Wreck me."*

*****

Will knows the moment the words left his mouth that he has said the right thing. Hannibal's maroon eyes darken almost alarmingly before he attacks Will's mouth again.

He doesn't remember how they got to the bed, only that he's suddenly on his back with his lover looming over him, his eyes rich with emotion. Will lets himself fall into the abyss of that gaze, drinking in love, desire, worship, and most thrillingly, the need to *ruin*.

"Your arms," says Hannibal. "Put them over your head and keep them there." He pulls off his tie and starts unbuttoning his shirt.

Understanding dawns on Will. They have never tried bondage before. He trusts Hannibal, but to be restrained... His cock twitches, apparently keen on the experiment. The young man stretches his arms up.

Hannibal undoes the buttons on Will's shirt and yanks them to where his hands are, twisting the fabric and using the sleeves to tie Will's wrists together. It is a mark of how much Hannibal truly wants this, because the rough treatment will probably damage the garment completely. Will feels his breath catch and a glimmer of nervousness spark in his abdomen.

"Hannibal, hold on," he says, and to his relief his lover does pause. "If I, um... If I want you to stop...?"

"Tell me to stop, and I will."

"But if I just- If I need time to, uh, to adjust, but I don't want you to stop *completely,* what do I say?"

Hannibal smiles crookedly. "Tell me to wait, and I will." He skates his fingernails over Will's bared chest. "I will bring you pleasure, mon rêve."

Will bites his lip again. "I know, I trust you. I don't trust my own reactions."

"It'll be all right," Hannibal murmurs. He takes his tie - a dark red paisley pattern - and winds it around Will's eyes. "Let me do this."

The bed shifts as Hannibal gets off, presumably to undress. Will thinks he looks ridiculous, hands bound, in stockings and garter belt, erection visible in panties. It's a good thing he can't see. He hears a rustle of paper and then he feels the dip in weight on the bed when Hannibal comes back.

"Oh, I would love to paint you like this," Hannibal purrs. "You look *exquisite.*"

"Take a picture then," Will says, shocking even himself. He licks his lips, thankful that he can't see Hannibal's expression at the moment. "Take a picture, now, and maybe you can take one after also."

He hears his lover laugh, and then a telltale shutter click. Hannibal keeps his phone in his jacket so he must have used Will's phone instead. Before Will can say anything else, he feels Hannibal place something really light on his chest. If he hasn't been blindfolded, he might not have noticed. "What's that?"

"Rose petals," says Hannibal.

Will is about to ask what the older man is planning to do with them when he feels the first gentle puff of air on his skin. The petal skims over his bare skin like the softest caress. Hannibal places another, over his belly button this time, and now Will can feel Hannibal straddling his legs, his palms running over the sheer stockings. It's more erotic than Will imagined, the sensation of Hannibal's warm touch without actual contact.

The older man blew gently on the petal at Will's belly, skimming his breath up Will's naked torso, over a pert nipple. When that petal falls from Will's neck, Hannibal starts another, and another, and another. Other than where he is resting his weight on Will's legs, Hannibal does not come into contact with his young lover. The petals are too delicate, the puffs of air where Hannibal bends low to blow over his skin reminders of how *close* Hannibal's sinful mouth is to his body. The sensuality of the entire experience leaves Will shaking, his fingers digging into the fabric bunched over his hands.

Soft whimpers break free from Will's lips when he feels the stalk of the rose pressed to his bare belly. There is an impression of thorns, but Hannibal does not press it down. He plays it over Will's chest in random patterns, exerting only the faintest of pressures over Will's sensitive areas. The teasing is driving Will slowly out of his mind. He shifts his hips experimentally and Hannibal tuts disapprovingly.

"I asked you to wreck me," Will mutters in a complaint. He is adamantly not pouting. "This is *not* wrecking."

"The night is young yet," says Hannibal with a chuckle. "I'm forgoing dinner for dessert, mon rêve. Hush now. Stay still."

"Hannibal..."

"Do I have to gag you, mongoose?" Hannibal asks. "Do I have to force submission from you?"

Will's nerves suddenly flare alive. Hannibal's tone is extremely mild, but the threat is real. The young man's mouth goes dry and he shakes his head. No, he needs to be able to vocalize when Hannibal finally releases that awesome self-control. He swallows and whispers, "No, I'll listen. I'll obey. Please, Hannibal."

The older man presses his lips to Will's in a chaste kiss. "Good."

He moves off the bed again. Will hears the telltale snap of their lube being opened, and then wet, obscene motions of hand on skin, except there are no hands on his skin. Will gulps, his mind supplying him with images of Hannibal stroking his cock while watching Will hold himself in place. It stirs Will's arousal far more than it ought. He can hear Hannibal's exhalations, the only clues to the older man's arousal.

Then the foot of the bed dips slightly. Will shouts when he feels Hannibal palming his cock over the silk panties. It's somehow deeply, *deeply* filthy, the fact that Will is wearing this and Hannibal is appreciating it so obviously. Will is surprised by his own keening when Hannibal starts pressing his wet mouth over his still-covered erection. He's trying not to come too fast and the older man is not helping; Hannibal noses the flimsy material aside and his tongue snakes in to explore Will's length.

"Oh god," Will gasps when Hannibal unclasps the garters from his stockings and pull his panties off in one smooth tug. Then Hannibal's mouth is back on him, taking his cock in deep. Will digs his fingers into the ruined shirt and has to fight not to put his hands on Hannibal. He is so absorbed in keeping his hands where they are that he doesn't register that Hannibal straddles him. He does pay attention when he feels Hannibal's slick hand on his cock though, and lets out an obscenely loud moan at the touch.

*****

Gorgeous.

Hannibal drinks in the sight in front of him. Will is straining, trying so hard to obey the doctor's injunction to keep still. Hannibal doesn't show mercy, however, stroking Will's erection with strong, sure moves, slicking it up thoroughly, and with each stroke Will whimpers and the muscles in his arms tense visibly.

It's good that Will is blindfolded, because the wicked grin that flashes on Hannibal's face may terrify the poor boy. Hannibal rubs his own erect cock against Will's and kisses the wanton

moan from his lover's mouth.

"Bend your knees, mon amour," whispers Hannibal, before he rises to his own knees. Then, as Will tries to process what Hannibal is going to do, the older man takes hold of his lover's erection and pushes it into himself. He winces at the burn, but doesn't stop until he feels Will completely sheathed inside himself.

Will's mouth has fallen open and he gulps in a shuddering breath only when Hannibal pulls off his blindfold. Rapidly blinking, Will looks as though someone has just punched him in the gut. "H-Hannibal?"

"Yes," says Hannibal. Will looks otherworldly, he thinks, cheeks flushed and pupils blown, his dark curls a halo for his exquisite face. The doctor feels a rush of pride, gloating in his ownership of this jewel. No one had seen it until Hannibal.

"God, Hannibal, you feel- You're so- God, it's so good," Will babbles. He tries to wriggle out of the knotted shirt and Hannibal leans forward to place one hand on the bonds. Will slides out of him partially and instinctively thrusts up to return to that wet heat. It startles a deep groan out of the older man, which is echoed by Will immediately after. "God, oh god, oh god Hannibal, please, let me touch you, I want to touch you."

Hannibal bares his teeth. "No."

Will barely has time to protest when Hannibal begins to move, writhing atop his young lover. He straightens again and arches his lower back, hands braced on both Will's knees, as he finds the perfect angle to chase his pleasure.

Though Will whines and whimpers, he keeps his arms over his head. Sweat is beading over his bare chest and Hannibal allows a crooked little smirk. He bends forward and licks along Will's sternum, his incredible flexibility put to good use, before he leans back again and scratches his nails down the top of Will's stockinged thighs.

It pulls a moan from the young man's throat. Hannibal does it again on the flanks, and then digs his fingers into the hollow behind each knee. Will cries out again, legs jerking and feet curling into the small of Hannibal's back.

Now Hannibal rips the stockings, tears them off his lover's legs. He grinds down, hard, deliberate, a punishing pace; Will's eyes glaze over and his jaw clenches.

"Do you want me to stop?" Hannibal asks, his voice like velvet midnight.

Will shakes his head violently. "No, god no, please don't stop. Just-oh god, you feel so *good*."

Hannibal pulls away completely and Will keens at the loss. The doctor only leans forward to release Will's hands from the shirt and then peers down at his lover through hooded eyes.

"Ruin me, Will," says Hannibal, and kisses Will savagely.

*****

The kiss tears into his lip and stings him into action.

Will doesn't even know where his strength comes from. He flips them over and, in one steady thrust, seats himself back into Hannibal. He braces his knees on the bed and his hands on Hannibal's shoulders, and use that as leverage to rut into the older man, harder and harder, until there is only the rhythm of their bodies and the sound of skin slapping together. The slide of torn silk over his legs barely registers now.

It is licentious and absolutely shameless, the way Will drives his hips forward into Hannibal, who croons and urges him to do it harder and faster. Hannibal runs his hands over Will's arms and face, pinching his nipples and then finally down to rip the garter belt off.

Will growls as he wraps a hand around his lover's cock and strokes him in time to his own thrusts, his face buried into Hannibal's neck. There are feral sounds filling his ears, though he can't discern which of them is making the noises.

He doesn't give a damn anyway.

Hot lines scrape down his back, and then Hannibal grabs Will's ass to pull him in closer. The older man mouths at Will's neck and sucks until Will is locked against him, and then he sinks his teeth in.

The sharp pain digs spurs into Will's brain. He jolts involuntarily, his hips slamming forward *hard.* It's feels so good that he does it again, and again, and again. He feels Hannibal's body clenching around him - it is bliss, hot and tight and *wanted* - and then the white-hot coil of lust low in his gut snaps and he comes, emptying himself into Hannibal.

He's cogent enough to keep his hand moving on his lover's cock, the rhythm erratic but firm, until he feels warmth spread over his hand. Hannibal grunts and his fingers clench on Will's back as he climaxes with a low groan.

*****

When he finally gathers his composure, Will feels on top of the world and incredibly humbled. He almost trips over his own feet as he traipses into the bathroom to grab a hand towel to clean up the mess on Hannibal's belly.

When he comes back, Hannibal is looking at his white shirt with a wry expression.

"I liked this shirt," he says blandly, and tosses it to the floor.

Will comes to him and wipes away his ejaculate. The towel then joins the doomed white shirt. "You can afford to buy a new one. Or, you know, you can consider wearing the ten thousand other shirts in your fashion cavern."

"I really should have gagged you." Hannibal pulls him in for a kiss. "You have a cheeky tongue."

"What are you gonna do, eat me?" Will grins and licks Hannibal's lower lip. He feels Hannibal groping down his ass and then pulling at the ruined lace stocking over the back of

his thigh. "I'm glad you like the stockings. I was so embarrassed buying them."

"I love the stockings. Should I get you more?"

Will squirms and nibbles at his older lover. "I'd like to see you wear them instead. You have dancer's legs, did you know? Sexy as hell."

"You may persuade me at another time. Thank you for the other gifts, mon amour," says Hannibal. He tugs Will into his lap and they exchange lazy kisses. "Mine are not as inspired, alas."

Will hums. "What did you get me?"

"Roses," says Hannibal. "A watch, because yours is falling apart. Tickets to the National Philharmonic for a performance of *Handel's Messiah*."

"They sound perfect."

"Oh, and a contractor for a heated backyard shelter for a dog," Hannibal adds with a small smile.

Will brightens. "Really? We're really getting a dog?"

"I know you like dogs. So long as they stay outdoors and do not shed on my furniture, I am willing to coexist with them."

"I'll still be bringing dog hair into the house. Are you going to make me stay out too?"

"You're the one vacuuming, so I forebear." Hannibal kisses Will again. "And I much prefer your presence in our bed."

"Hannibal?"

"Yes?"

"I can take it," Will says quietly. "I'm not afraid, not of you. You can be rough with me."

Hannibal falls silent. He tucks Will close and sighs. "I'm not a good man, Will. What I can do with my hands goes far beyond rending stockings to tatters."

"I know that," says Will. Then he looks into Hannibal's eyes. "But that's not good enough, is it?"

"Unfortunately, no. This is too easy." Hannibal demonstrates by tearing the rest of the sheer silk off Will's left leg. "What I do - what I used to do... It was a challenge, in so many ways. And pain is not something I would ever want to visit on you. I had thought I could turn this aspect of myself off like a switch. It turns out to be more of a rheostat."

If the choice is between Hannibal's peace of mind and the lives of the undeserving and cruel, Will knows what he'll choose.

"Do you have to display the bodies? Or eat them?" he asks.

"It is cathartic for me. More than drawing, or playing an instrument, or cooking." Hannibal exhales and continues, "I have to transfer my passions for the destructive towards something else."

"The culinary arts alone can't satisfy you?"

"Cooking is creative. Killing is destructive. I can satisfy one but not the other, though I have been trying. It is not yet a void to be filled, but it will become more pressing over time," says Hannibal ruefully. "I am very aware of who I am, unfortunately. If I am chafing at the bit now, I will be positively murderous by September."

Will chews on the inside of his cheek and then says, "If you have to, then do what you need to."

Hannibal strokes through Will's curls. "You want me to indulge in my violence?"

"I want you to be happy," says Will. His conscience nags at him, but he defiantly shuts it down. "And if killing and displaying people in terribly, monstrously elegant ways is what you need, then go ahead. We are not eating the meat though. I'd rather go vegan."

Hannibal actually makes a pained grumble at that, and Will chuckles.

"Is that good enough an outlet?"

"Yes, it is," admits Hannibal. "I shall refrain from the theatrical, however. The less attention we garner the better. I do not wish to risk you."

"When you butcher the animals, I want to watch," says Will. He surprises Hannibal with that, but Will is beyond caring about morality now. "I can't give you the violence you need, but I want to see it. Witness it. Because it's part of you, and I don't ever want you to hide that side of you from me."

"My very own patron, audience and critic, rolled up into one exquisite package." Hannibal smiles. "As you wish."

Will knows it's wrong to permit Hannibal to kill as he wants.

He knows it's wrong to want to watch Hannibal murder another person.

He also knows, down to his very marrow, that he'll personally kill anyone who dares try to separate him from Hannibal Lecter.

With a smile he slides off Hannibal's lap and removes the stockings completely. "Shower and then dinner?"

"Lead the way."

"Oh," says Will as he tosses the hand towel into their laundry basket, "I think your Bentley needs a checkup, and I know just the place to bring it."

Hannibal catches the sly tone in Will's words, and the smile on his face deepens.

End Notes

This isn't supposed to be plotty, it's meant to be porny! Turns out that there's just a smidgen of plot in there. Full plotty stuff comes in the next installment; I'm working on it.

PS: I'll crucify a swimmer to get art of Will in his 'Let's Seduce Hannibal' garter and stockings and panties outfit. Please?

PPS: I'm on tumblr

Himalayan Salt Block
Voice Art Canvas

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!